

Independent Human Rights Commission, that Afghan women are losing ground. Many women continue to endure hardships including targeted violence, limited mobility, illiteracy, and a high rate of maternal mortality. I also am very concerned about reports that schools continue to be targeted for violence, including dozens in the past year. Clearly, we have more work to do.

While I hope that all the aid for Afghanistan will help women, I commend the Appropriations Committee for continuing to recognize the needs of Afghan women.

I would also like to commend Chairman LOWEY for her commonsense approach to refining the Global Gag Rule. Though I support a full repeal of this harmful policy, the Lowey provision is a first step toward eliminating the Gag Rule altogether—it will allow organizations to receive contraceptives which are proven to prevent unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. It makes sense and it's the right thing to do.

As a co-chair of the Human Trafficking Caucus and a long-time proponent of increased efforts to combat this global human rights travesty, I am pleased to note the language regarding trafficking in the report that accompanies this bill. Earlier this year, I sent a letter to the Department of State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee expressing my support for these critical initiatives to combat trafficking. The committee report includes a recommendation that the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Office at the Department of State retain control of the monies appropriated for TIP programs and not be subject to decentralized influence of field posts and to enable the TIP Office to disburse the necessary anti-trafficking funding to grantees more quickly. The committee also recommends the addition of six full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to the TIP office so that it can effectively monitor its anti-trafficking grants and can effectively fulfill the vital, congressionally assigned responsibility given to the Senior Policy Operating Group, which it chairs, of monitoring and coordinating the domestic and international anti-trafficking grants and policies of all U.S. agencies.

The committee also has directed \$14,000,000 to the Trafficking in Persons program, which is \$5,300,000 above the President's request, and \$6,000,000 in INCLE (International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement) funding for activities to prevent trafficking in persons. I have worked closely with Ranking Member WOLF on this issue over the past few years, and I thank him for his leadership in the fight against trafficking and human rights abuses worldwide.

Finally, as a co-chair and co-founder of the Hellenic Caucus, I am pleased that the committee has restored funding for the Greek desk at Voice of America. Because Greece is located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, maintaining this critical program is vital to U.S. interests in this important region of the world.

I commend Chairwoman LOWEY and Ranking Member WOLF for their work in bringing this bill forward, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 22, 2007

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Madam Speaker, on Thursday, June 21, 2007, I was absent during rollcall vote No. 541. Had I been present, I would have voted "no" on agreeing to the King of Iowa Amendment.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JERRY WELLER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 22, 2007

Mr. WELLER. Madam Speaker, on rollcall Nos. 449, 500 and 501, I was absent due to flight difficulties.

Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on all three.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RUSS CARNAHAN

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 22, 2007

Mr. CARNAHAN. Madam Speaker, during consideration of H.R. 2764 on the Pence Amendment thereto roll No. 540, my vote was mistakenly recorded as no; however, I intended to vote yes. I strongly support restrictions of financial aid to the Palestinian government in the West Bank and Gaza, unless the president certifies that it renounces terrorism, acknowledges the existence of Israel and abides by previous agreements reached between the Palestinians and Israel, with the exception of certain humanitarian aid. I would like the record to reflect my intent to vote yes on roll No. 540 in support of the Pence Amendment. Moreover, I voted multiple times in the 109th Congress in favor of the restrictions contained in the Pence Amendment. Furthermore, I voted in favor of final passage of H.R. 2764, which included the restrictions contained in the Pence Amendment.

WORLD REFUGEE DAY: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF AFRICAN REFUGEES

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 22, 2007

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, two days ago, on June 20th, the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health held a hearing on the occasion of World Refugee Day. This day was designated by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001 to be commemorated each year in order to honor the contributions of refugees around the world and to call attention to the plight of those who continue to suffer as refugees. This day also coincides with Africa Refugee Day, which has been commemorated since 1975 and was es-

tablished by the Organization of African Unity Commission of Ten on Refugees as a way to raise funds for assistance for refugees in Africa.

It is shocking to consider that 12 million people in the world are refugees today, and almost a quarter of those, 3.2 million, live in Africa. In addition, Africa has an estimated 12 million Internally Displaced Persons, most of whom are victims of conflicts within their countries. Floods and droughts have also contributed to the displacement of large numbers of African people. More than half of the world's refugees have lived in camps for several years, with no foreseeable prospects for returning to their homes and a normal lifestyle.

No one can measure the suffering that often comes with being a refugee—being a stranger in a strange land, the inability of children to attend school, the frustration of parents unable to provide the basic necessities for their families, the hardships and fears that come with living in a tent, or having no shelter at all. One might forget that refugees often also are suffering the emotional trauma that results from violence inherent in the conflicts that produce refugees.

For that reason, it was particularly useful to hear the testimony of Neal Porter, the Director of International Services from the Center for Victims of Torture. Legislation that I have sponsored, including the Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act of 2007 which passed the House on April 25, 2007 and is now pending in the Senate, provides authorization for programming that helps refugees and others suffering the effects of torture. I would encourage my colleagues in the Senate to act on this bill so that the Center for Victims of Torture and others who provide services to torture survivors can receive the assistance they so desperately need.

The international community accomplished a major milestone when it recognized refugees as having certain rights under international law in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees plays a major role in ensuring that the promised resources and protection are provided. However, as laudable as international recognition and assistance are for assisting those forced to flee from their homes, far more needs to be done to prevent people from becoming refugees in the first place, and to accommodate the safe return and re-establishment of those already refugees or IDPs. This subcommittee hearing provided an important opportunity to examine what we in the United States and the world community can do in this respect.

Although I and others have devoted significant attention in recent months and years to the tragedy in Darfur, one can never overpublicize the desperate situation of the victims of the Sudanese Government's genocide. When I think of refugees, my mind immediately recalls those who I met in the Mukjar and Kalma camps, only some of the 2 million who have been displaced from their homes in that region. The term "displaced" does not begin to describe the nightmare situation that these people must live in. As we have heard through testimony at recent hearings on Darfur, these people long most of all not for food or shelter, though they have little of either, but for protection. And with good reason—over 450,000 people have died in the violence of Darfur.